

Wednesday, November 05, 2003

2/82nd Airborne paratroopers hold memorial service for two comrades



Memorial display for Spc. Douglas J. Weismantle and Pfc. Jose E. Casanova, both of HHC, 1-325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. Both were killed in a vehicle accident in Iraq on Oct. 12.

Story and photo by Spc. Jason B. Baker, 49th Public Affairs Detachment (Airborne), 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, gathered in remembrance at a memorial service in honor of two of their comrades Oct. 17.

The nighttime memorial service was held to honor All-Americans, Spc. Douglas J. Weismantle, 28, of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Pfc. Jose E. Casanova, 23, of Los Angeles, Calif.

Both Red Falcon paratroopers were communications specialists serving in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment.

Battalion Chaplain (Capt.) Darren Chester, 1st Bn., 325th AIR, started the ceremony, welcoming the soldiers who had traveled to mourn and pay tribute to their fallen comrade.

After the invocation, Sgt. Nicholas J. Gilbert, HHC, 1st Bn., 325th AIR, eulogized his close friend and fellow paratrooper, Weismantle.

"It's hard to accept," Gilbert said of the loss of his close friend, "but I understand he is in a better place now."

Gilbert went on to describe his friend as the type of person who always had a smile on his face and whose company would always make the toughest of days easier.

Casanova was remembered by his friend Spc. Michael J. Grevera, HHC, 1st Bn., 325th AIR.

"Casanova never complained," Grevera said. "He was someone who always had a hand to lend. He could always discover the benefit of any situation he was in."

Grevera remembered the side of his friend's personality that was most apparent to those who knew him, Casanova's love for music.

While deployed, Casanova made a pair of drumsticks before family members were able to send him a real pair. Everywhere he went, he played, and anything could be turned into a set of drums.

After a solo version of "Amazing Grace," sung by Pfc. Terrill McClary, HHC, 1st Bn., 325th AIR, the company commander, Capt. Robert Boone, took time to remember his two fallen paratroopers, using the opportunity to inspire his company to continue the mission.

Boone said he had no doubt that if Casanova hadn't been killed, Casanova would have one day been playing music professionally. Boone said he was sure that Casanova would remind them that the "show must go on."

The ceremony closed when all in attendance were invited to pay their courtesy to the paratroopers by saluting a personal memorial display. The display included not only the traditional M-4 carbine, I.D. tags, berets and boots, but also included personal touches, including Casanova's homemade drumsticks and Weismantle's CD player and headphones.

The two paratroopers were killed Oct. 12 when they were involved in an accident with an Iraqi dump truck. The dump truck was speeding and tried to pass the paratroopers' M998 Humvee. Instead the Iraqi truck clipped the Humvee and the dump truck then spun out of control flipping onto the Humvee, killing and trapping the paratroopers inside.

The Red Falcon battalion is currently attached to the 1st Armored Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team in support of Task Force 1st Armored Division for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sri Lanka's leader suspends Parliament and deploys troops

By David Rhode, The New York Times

NEW DELHI, Nov. 4 — In a surprise move, Sri Lanka's president suspended parliament, fired three top government ministers and deployed troops at key buildings in the capital of Colombo today, the state-run news media reported. The move sparked a political crisis in the country and fueled fears that a two-year cease-fire between government forces and ethnic Tamil rebels would collapse.

Safety Tip **Pre-mission briefings**

Pre mission briefings must include the following at a minimum:

- Route to be taken
- Map covering entire route
- PLUGGER/ GPS
- Actions on contact
- Vehicle recovery procedures
- SIGACTS over the last 24 hours with emphasis along route, to include adjacent sectors
- Radio check made with higher headquarters and all convoy vehicles
- MEDEVAC frequency and sector headquarters frequency
- MEDEVAC 9 Line
- Current weapons status and any weapon status changes which may take place according to sector entered
- Convoy speed
- 1 CBLS (combat lifesaver) bag
- Tow bar or tow strap according to vehicle size
- Mission Brief must end with brief back and questions

Chaplain's thought for the day **Weighed Down**

David Posman, 33, of Providence, R.I., was arrested after allegedly knocking out an armored car driver and stealing the closest four bags of money. It turned out they contained \$800 in PENNIES, weighed 30 pounds each, and slowed him to a stagger during his getaway so that police officers easily jumped him from behind.

David Posman is not the first person to make the mistake of trying to run while being weighed down. We can get bogged down with things that pull us away from God. And as with Posman, those things that are weighing us down are not worth nearly as much as we thought they were when we grabbed hold of them.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1)

Anything weighing you down? May you lay it aside today.

Sri Lankan political analysts said President Chandrika Kumaratunga appeared to be trying to severely weaken her bitter political rival, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. President Kumaratunga has harshly criticized the prime minister for making too many concessions in peace talks with the rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Oddly Enough **Man saves fish with kiss of life**

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - A former Belgian ambulance driver put his first aid skills to good use by reviving one of his pond fish with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, a newspaper said Tuesday.

Leo Van Aert was so happy about having saved the life of his cherished koi he wants to name it after one of his grandchildren, the *Gazet Van Antwerpen* said.

Van Aert, 57, was hosting a party at his home near the Belgian port of Antwerp when his wife noticed the koi -- a spotted Japanese carp -- floating on the surface of the garden pond.

Van Aert said the 60-cm (24-inch) long fish was "acting funny," swimming and jumping frantically before stopping dead in the water.

He figured the koi had had a heart attack and took it out of the water to try to resuscitate it, giving it heart massages before joining lips with the fish.

"After 15 minutes, the fish started to move again so I put him in the pond...but when he fell over again, I again applied mouth-to-mouth and heart massages," he said. "That's when the fish recovered."

This Day in History **Nov. 5, 1968**

Nixon wins presidential election in 1968

From HistoryChannel.com

On this day in history, Nov. 5, 1968, eight years after being defeated by John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election, Richard Nixon defeats Hubert H. Humphrey and is elected president.

Two years after losing to Kennedy, Nixon ran for governor of California and lost in a bitter campaign against Edmund G. ("Pat") Brown. Most political observers believed that Nixon's political career was over, but by February 1968, he had sufficiently recovered his political standing in the Republican Party to announce his candidacy for president.

Taking a stance between the more conservative elements of his party led by Ronald Reagan and the liberal Northeastern wing led by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, Nixon won the nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach.

For his running mate, he chose the governor of Maryland, Spiro T. Agnew. His Democratic opponent, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, was weakened by internal divisions within his own party, stemming in part from the growing dissatisfaction with the Johnson administration's handling of the Vietnam War. Alabama governor George C. Wallace--running on a third party ticket--further complicated the election.

Although Nixon and Humphrey each gained about 43 percent of the popular vote, the distribution of Nixon's nearly 32 million votes gave him a clear majority in the Electoral College.